VALENTINIAN VARIATIONS ON LK 12,8-9/MT 10,32

BY

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ABSTRACT: Clement of Alexandria has preserved a fragment of Herakleon, disciple of Valentinus, which comments on Lk 12,8-9 (11) par. The article interprets Herakleon's fragment as a piece of subtle second century Gospel exegesis, considers it in the context of the early Christian exegesis of Lk 12,8-9 par. and compares it with another Valentinian exegesis of the same verse which is related by Tertullian. Some conjectures as to the form of Herakleon's commentary are attempted: Apparently he first quoted the lemma and then commented on it, carefully discussing verse after verse. Method and form of the fragment are close to Herakleon's 'hypomnemata' on the Gospel of John. Our piece, however, probably formed no part of these 'hypomnemata'—Herakleon being the first known Christian exegete who commented both on the Gospel of Luke (taking into account the Synoptic parallels) and the Gospel of John.

Discussing the subject of martyrdom Clement of Alexandria writes in Str. 4,70,1-72,4:

> The Lord has spoken explicitly about martyrdom, let us put together the different sayings:
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> 'I say to you, whoever confesses in me before men, the Son of man will also confess in him before the angels of God. Whoever has denied me before men, him I will also deny before the angels.'[1]
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> 'Whoever is ashamed of me or my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him, when he will come in the glory of his father together with his angels.'[2]
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> 'Whoever confesses in me before men, I will also confess in him before my father who is in heavens.'[3]

[1] Lk 12,8-9.—Abbreviations for periodicals, series etc in the following notes are according to S. Schwertner, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie. Abkürzungsverzeichnis*, Berlin—New York 1994.

[2] Mk 8,38.

[3] Mt 10,32.—Here and elsewhere in my paper I deliberately use the solecism 'confess in me/him' in order to bring out a point which is important for Herakleon's exegesis.

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'When they bring you into the synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry beforehand how you will defend yourself and what you will say. The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you should say.'[4]

Interpreting this passage Herakleon, the most famous member of the school of Valentinus, says in these words that confession is on the one hand the confession in faith and conduct, on the other hand the vocal confession. 'The vocal confession takes place also in front of the authorities and most people believe that this is the only kind of confession—but this belief is unsound because the hypocrites, too, can make this kind of confession. In this case this saying will have no universal application. For not all those that are saved made a vocal confession and then passed away, among them are Matthew, Philipp, Thomas, Levi and many others. The vocal confession is not for everyone, but only for particular people. Here he [i.e. Jesus Christ] talks of the confession that is for everyone, that is the confession in works and deeds that are fitting for someone who believes in him. This confession has then as a consequence also that confession which is for particular people, the confession before the authorities, but only when it is necessary and reasonable.[5] Such a person will also make a vocal confession, after he has first made rightly a confession with his inner attitude. And with regard to 'those who confess' he rightly said 'in me', but with regard to 'those who deny' he added 'me'. For those deny him although they confess him with their voice, because they do not confess him in practice. For only those confess in him, who live in confession and in conduct according to him; and he himself confesses in them because he has seized them and is held fast by them. Therefore 'he can never deny himself'.[6] But those that are not in him deny him. For he did not say 'whoever will deny in me' but rather 'will deny me'. No one who is in him ever denies him. As regards the phrase 'before men': This has to be understood both of those who are saved and of the pagans; they will confess before the ones also with their life, and before the others also with their voice.[7]

We know little about Herakleon, the author of this fragment quoted by Clement: Clement calls him "the most famous member of the school of Valentinus." Irenaeus of Lyon mentions him in the course of a satirical comparison between the school of Valentinus and its conception of the

[4] Lk 12,11-12.

[5] O. Stählin (BKV 19), 52: «und wenn die vernünftige Überlegung es fordert.» C. Mondésert (SC 463), 175: «. . . et si la raison le demande.» But cf. A. Orbe, *Los primeros herejes ante la persecucion* (AnGr 83), Rome 1956, 2 (note 4).

[6] 2 Tim 2,13. Here I accept with L. Früchtel (see the apparatus of the GCS-edition) and A. van den Hoek (SC 463) the text of the Laurentianus V 3.

[7] Clemens Alexandrinus II. Ed. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu (GCS) 279,27-281,2/ Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates. Stromate IV (SC 463), Ed. A. van den Hoek/transl. C. Mondésert, 172-175.

Godhead: For Irenaeus Herakleon is—like Ptolemy—a disciple of Valentinus.[8] Origen who quotes copiously from Herakleon's 'hypomnemata' on the Gospel of John, calls him as a disciple (γνώριμος) of Valentinus.[9] Hippolytus of Rome mentions Herakleon together with Ptolemy as the heads of the Italian branch of the school of Valentinus, whereas Bardaisanes and a certain Axionikos are the most prominent members of the Eastern branch.[10] Herakleon's discipleship and personal acquaintance with Valentinus can with some probability be dated to the middle of the 2nd century.[11]

The original context of this fragment of Herakleon is unclear. It is rather doubtful whether the quotation is taken from Herakleon's 'hypomnemata', his commentary on (selected passages of?) the Gospel of John. Although the 'hypomnemata' are occasionally referring to, and quoting texts other than the Gospel of John,[12] they do not enter into a detailed exegesis of

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[8] Irenaeus of Lyon, *haer.* 2,4,1 (Rousseau-Doutreleau [SC 294] 46).

[9] Origenes, Jo. II,14 (Preuschen [GCS] 70,3-4).

[10] Hippolytus, *ref.* 6,29,1; 6,35,6 (Marcovich [PTS] 237,5f/249,28f).

[11] A. Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus* (WUNT 142), Tübingen 367. I do not, however, accept some of the arguments Wucherpfennig cites in support of this date. For example, his claim that Herakleon *fr.* 12 (Völker/see note 12) indicates a mediating role of Herakleon in the Roman Easter controversy strikes me as fanciful.—Cf. also T. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 2), Leipzig 2000, 316 (note 967).

[12] Unfortunately we still lack a commentary and a thoroughgoing analysis of all the extant fragments of Herakleon. Therefore a number of questions which are vitally important for their interpretation have still not been answered. In the following I offer a preliminary survey of the quotations of, and allusions to, biblical writings other than the Gospel of John (based on the apparatus of the edition by W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* [SQS 5], Tübingen 1932). The numbering of the fragments follows Völker's edition which adopted the numbering proposed by A.E. Brooke, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (TaS), Cambridge 1891 (non vidi): Herakleon, *fr.* 1 (Völker 64,2-3) (Prov 30,6); *fr.* 13 (Völker 69,20) (allusion to Hebr 9,7); *fr.* 17 (allusion to II Pe 1,11 (Völker 71,24); *fr.* 22 (Völker 74,25f) (allusion to Rom 10,18); *fr.* 22 (Völker 75,4f) (allusion to Rom 1,25); *fr.* 24 (Völker 75,23 (reference to Rom 12,1); *fr.* 33 (Völker 78,2f) (gloss on Mt 9,37); *fr.* 35 (Völker 79,4f) (allusion to Mt 13,37); *fr.* 40 (Völker 80,31) (allusion to Mt 10,28); *fr.* 40 (Völker 81,4 ff) (paraphrase/quotation of I Kor 15,53ff); *fr.* 40 (Völker 81,12f) (allusion to Rom 7,13); *fr.* 40 (Völker 82,3f) (allusion to Gen 6,2); *fr.* 40 (Völker 82,6-8) (Mt 8,12); *fr.* 40 (Völker 82,8-9) (Is 1,2); *fr.* 40 (Völker 82,10f.11) (allusion to Is 1,4; 5,1); *fr.* 46 (Völker 84,11f) (allusion to Mt 23,15.33); *fr.* 48 (Völker 84,33) (allusion to Rom 13,4); *fr.* 49 (Völker 85,11f) (allusion to Mt 3,11/Lk 3,16—it is not clear whether Herakleon is explaining this verse). On ancient commentaries quoting from other works in order to elucidate a point, cf. M. del Fabbro, Il commentario nella tradizione papiracea, in: *Studia Papyrologica* 18 (1979), 69-132: 102ff.

any of these texts but rather use them in order to elucidate the Gospel of John. Hence it seems probable that our fragment is taken from an exegetical work other than the 'hypomnemata' which are quoted by Origen.

It has been suggested with some plausibility that also the 'cento' of scriptural verses in Str. 4,70 is a quotation from Herakleon.[13] The structure of the 'cento' is simple: It starts with a quotation of Lk 12,8-9. It then adds the parallels Mk 8,38 and Mt 10,32. Lk 12,10 is left out because it sits uneasily with the context. Lk 12,11-12 forms the conclusion. The exegesis of Herakleon focusses on Lk 12,8; however, when Herakleon talks of the confession before the 'authorities' he picks up a word from Lk 12,11.[14]

If one compares Herakleon's Greek text with the text printed in the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece, the following differences have to be noted:

- Lk 12,9: In Herakleon's version the passive form of the verb ἀπαρνέω has been changed into the first person singular. At the end of the verse the genitive attribute τοῦ θεοῦ has been omitted.
- Mk 8,38: After τῶν ἀγγέλων the personal pronoun αὐτοῦ has replaced the attribute τῶν ἁγίων.
- Lk 12,11-12: Nestle-Aland 27th edition has εἰσφέρωσιν . . . ἐπὶ τάς. The reading εἰς τὰς is attested by, amongst few others manuscripts, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Bezae. Herakleon (?) writes φέρωσιν . . . εἰς τὰς; it is possible that for him the prefix was redundant.

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[13] T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons. Erster Band: Das Neue Testament vor Origenes*, Erlangen 1888, 741-2; A.v. Harnack, in: *ThLZ 17* (1892), 72. There is, of course, no proof of Zahn's and Harnack's suggestion. Zahn compares Irenaeus, *haer.* III,2,1 (quia varie sunt dictae) with the introductory phrase *Str.* IV,72,1: καὶ τὰ διαφόρως γεγραμμένα συντάξωμεν and argues that it is Herakleon, not Clement, who is interested in the variations between the parallel passages. Zahn also observed that Herakleon's exegesis seems to refer only to Lk 12,8 (in fact he also refers to Lk 12,11-12!) and acribed this to its fragmentary character. However, R. Warns, *Untersuchungen zum 2.Clemensbrief*, Diss. Marburg 1985, 340 (note 7433) points out against both Zahn and Harnack that Herakleon quotes Lk 12,9 in a variant form (cf. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu 280,30). I believe that this argument does not invalidate the claim of Zahn and Harnack: 279,30f is (like 280,30) a free quotation—not as Warns tries to demonstrate (op.cit. 333ff)—a variant reading derived from an unknown Egyptian gospel. Moreover, as far as I can make out, it is quite probable that Herakleon's hypomnemata on the Gospel of John quoted the lemmata to which the commentary referred. Cf. E.G. Turner, *Greek Papyri. An Introduction*, Oxford 1968, 115.

[14] Stählin-Früchtel-Treu 280, 13.21.

– The apparatus of the GCS-edition suggests that προμεριμνᾶτε (instead of μεριμνήσητε) is due to Mk 13,11. Again Codex Bezae has the same text.

Clement introduces the quotation from Herakleon with τοῦτον ἐξηγούμενος τὸν τόπον. It is not quite clear how this should be understood.

Does 'τοῦτον ... τὸν τόπον' refer to the whole cento? In the fragment preserved by Clement Herakleon deals with Lk 12,8-9. However, he also alludes to Lk 12,11 when he talks of the vocal confession before the authorities.

Herakleon proposes a dihairesis to clarify the concept of ὁμολογία (confession):[15] There is on the one hand the confession in faith and conduct, and on the other hand the vocal confession. Moreover, he continues, vocal confession can *also* take place before the authorities; unfortunately, it is this kind of confession which many people believe to be the only kind of confession. Herakleon had to add καί (also), because Lk 12,8 only mentions the confession before men—this confession is not necessarily a confession before the authorities (Lk 12,11), i.e. a confession in a situation of persecution. At the end of our fragment Herakleon stresses that the phrase 'before men' refers both to pagans and to those that are saved; with regard to both audiences confession can be either vocal or in life and conduct.

The first sentence of the quotation, then, criticises the narrow martyrological concept of confession held by the many: Vocal confession before the authorities can also be made by hypocrites. Moreover, Herakleon argues, if you restrict the meaning of confession in this way, Jesus'saying has no longer a universal application: Not all of those who are saved have made this kind of vocal confession before the authorities—and Herakleon cites as examples disciples of Jesus like Matthew, Philipp, Thomas and Levi who did not suffer martyrdom. The conclusion is clear: Vocal confession as a martyr is only a special case; it does not exhaust the Christian concept of confession. In some instances this special kind of confession before the authorities will follow the confession in faith and conduct. But not all Christians are required to make it, only those from whom the situation demands it.

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[15] Cf. Herakleon, *fr.* 46 (Völker), where Herakleon distinguishes three kinds of children: Those by nature, those by will, those by merit.—In this fragment Herakleon does not use the word 'martyrdom' or cognate terminology, see C. Scholten, *Martyrium und Sophiamythos im Gnostizismus nach den Texten von Nag Hammadi* (JAC.E 14) Münster 1987, 112-14.

For Herakleon it is clear that in Lk 12,8/Mk 8,38 and Mt 10,32 Jesus is employing the wider notion of confession, the confession in works and deeds that correspond to one's faith. Perhaps he felt justified in his belief because Jesus seems to make a general and eschatologically relevant distinction between two sorts of people: Those who confess him and those who deny him. This explains the structure of the scriptural cento composed by Herakleon: The first three quotations employ a universally valid notion of confession, only the last specifies the particular case of a confession before the authorities.

Herakleon continues his detailed exegesis of the gospel text. There it is said 'those who confess *in* me', but 'those who deny me'.

Herakleon exploits this difference by reading into it his initial distinction between vocal confession and confession in faith and conduct: Clearly, it is this latter confession that does not deny the Lord; a confession that is in effect made by the Lord himself who has seized the believers and is held fast by them. Those whose confession is the Lord's confession through them can never disown the Lord, because the Lord cannot disown himself. Those, however, who confess the Lord only with their voice, do, in effect, deny him. They betray the Lord because they have never been 'in' the Lord. The christological focus of Herakleon's concept of confession is most impressive.[16]

Finally Herakleon focusses on the phrase 'before men': This includes both fellow Christians and pagans. Again it is clear that here the narrow definition of confession cannot possibly apply. Before pagans and fellow Christians alike both kinds of confession are called for: vocal confession and confession in faith and conduct.

Herakleon's interpretation of Lk 12,8 is a subtle piece of 2nd century Christian gospel exegesis. The disciple of Valentinus wishes to establish that the many are wrong when they restrict the meaning of confession to the witness before secular authorities. In this case he exercises his exegetical ingenuity in order to preserve the full richness of the scriptural passage and to subvert an exegesis that effectively reduces its scope and meaning. It is also important to note that Herakleon's cento of scriptural

[16] For the idea of the presence of Christ within the martyr, cf. F.J. Dölger, Christophoros als Ehrentitel für Martyrer und Heilige im christlichen Altertum, in: Idem, *Antike und Christentum. Band IV*, Münster 1934, 73-80; H.v. Campenhausen, *Die Idee des Martyriums in der Alten Kirche*, 2nd edition, Göttingen 1964, 89-93.

verses carefully prepares the ground for his exegesis; it is, indeed, part of his exegesis.

II

Herakleon suggests that his exegesis of Lk 12,8-9 is directed against a majority view which restricts the meaning of confesson to vocal confession before secular authorities. However, as regards the early Christian interpretations of Lk 12,8f par., a different picture emerges.

In 2 Clement 3,2-4 it is said:

> Yea, he himself said: Whoever confesses me, him will I confess before the Father. This then is our reward, if only we shall confess him through whom we are saved. But wherein do we confess him? When we do that which he says and do not disobey his commandments, and not only honour him with our lips, but with our whole heart and our whole mind.[17]

And 2 Clement 4,1 continues:

> Let us therefore not only call him Lord, for this will not save us. For he says: Not everyone that says to me: Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he who is doing righteousness. So then, brothers, let us confess him in our works, by loving one another, by not comitting adultery nor speaking evil against one another, nor envying, but being temperate, merciful, good. And we ought to have fellow feeling with one another and not to be greedy. By these works let us confess Him, and not by the contrary.[18]

Thus there is some agreement between 2 Clement and Herakleon;[19] both authors contend that confessing Christ means to lead a distinctly Christian life.

Tertullian, like Herakleon, focusses on the difference between 'confessing in me' and 'denying me'. In Scorpiace 9,9 he writes:

> Whoever confesses himself to be a Christian, testifies that he belongs to Christ; whoever belongs to Christ, is necessarily in Christ. But if he is in Christ, he

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[17] Ed. Funk-Bihlmeyer, 3rd edition, Tübingen 1970, 72,l.17-23. Translation: J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers I,2*, London 1890 (Reprint Hildesheim-New York 1973), 307 (altered).

[18] Ed. Funk-Bihlmeyer (see preceding note), 72,l.25-73,l.1. Translation: Lightfoot (see preceding note), 308. Cf. A. Orbe, op.cit. (see note 5), 2 (note 6).

[19] But cf. R. Warns, *Untersuchungen zum 2. Clemensbrief*, Diss. Marburg 1985, 342-348 who believes that 2 Clement is arguing against a Valentinian denial of martyrdom. Again Warns has failed to convince me.

> also confesses in Christ, if he confesses himself to be a Christian. For this would be impossible if he were not in Christ. Moreover, by confessing in Christ he also confesses Christ, who is in himself, while he himself is in him, namely as a Christian. For if you use the word 'day', you have designated with this word that very light which produces the day, even if you do not use the word 'light'. Similarly, even if he does not say in these words 'whoever has confessed me', there is no difference between the act of daily confession and the meaning of the Lord's pronouncement.[20]

In this passage Tertullian tries to make clear that the rather awkward phrase 'whoever confesses in me' simply refers to the daily confession of Christians, i.e. their confession of *Christ himself who is in them*. In the following he points out that since the confession is in Christ, its opposite, the denial, is also in Christ:

> Whoever confesses himself to be what he is, that is a Christian, also confesses that through which he is what he is: that is Christ. Accordingly, whoever has denied that he is a Christian, has denied it in Christ by denying that he is in Christ when he has denied that he is a Christian; and by denying that Christ is in him when he denies that he is in Christ, he will also deny Christ. Thus the same applies in both cases: Whoever will deny in Christ will deny Christ and whoever will confess in Christ will confess Christ.[21]

But why, then, did Christ talk of 'denying me' instead of 'denying in me'? Tertullian makes a suggestion:

> He had foreseen that Christianity would often be attacked with such force that whoever had denied that he is a Christian would also be compelled to deny Christ by uttering blasphemies.[22]

It is possible that this exegetical proposal is Tertullian's attempt to take account of Lk 12,10 which—as we have already seen—does not quite fit into the context of Lk 12,8-12.[23]

In his commentary on Matthew 10,32, Origen also focusses on the difference between 'confessing in me' and 'denying me'. Origen agrees with

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[20] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 9,9 (ed. Reifferscheid/Wissowa [CChr.SL II] 1085-1086).

[21] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 9,10 (ed. Reifferscheid/Wissowa [CChr.SL II] 1086).

[22] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 9,12 (ed. Reifferscheid/Wissowa [CChr.SL II] 1086).

[23] For a detailed analysis of Tertullian's remarks, cf. also A. Orbe, *Los primeros herejes ante la persecucion* (AnGr 83), Rome 1956, 50-62. Anyone who is familiar with the works of A. Orbe will understand that I cannot possibly set out, let alone discuss, all the ideas and proposals he puts forward in this study which is indeed centered around our Herakleon fragment and the passage from Tertullian's Scorpiace.

Herakleon that those who confess 'in Jesus Christ' are in him and that therefore Christ is in them—that is their advantage compared with those who deny him and who cannot claim that they are in him or he is in them.[24]

In his homily on Mt 10,23-33 John Chrysostom explains the difference between 'confessing in me' and 'denying me' by pointing out that the Lord wished to indicate that those who confess him do not do this on their own accord, but supported by the grace from above. Conversely, those who deny him have not partaken of this grace.[25]

Cyril of Alexandria commented on both Mt 10,32 and Luke 12,8. But apparently he does not share the exegetical concerns of his illustrious predecessors: The short fragment culled from a catena on Mt argues that someone who confesses that Christ is God humbles himself and will have—as a true servant—the reward of Christ confessing him to the Father.[26] The fragment on Luke 12,8 is much longer, it focusses on the theologically correct confession of the lordship and divinity of Jesus Christ.[27]

A comparison between Herakleon's exegesis of Luke 12,8/Mt 10.32 and the interpretations advanced by 2 Clement, Tertullian, Origen and John Chrysostom clearly demonstrates a fundamental agreement on important points: Confession should not be understood in a narrow martyrological sense; the difference between 'confessing in me' and 'denying me' is significant and calls for an exegetical explanation. This should come as no surprise for those who have paid attention to Clement's of Alexandria comment on the fragment of Herakleon.

Clement explicitly says that concerning the exegesis of Lk 12,8 there is large agreement between Herakleon and him.[28] He limits his criticism to

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[24] Origen, *fr.* in Mt. Nr. 231 (ed. Klostermann/Benz [GCS], Leipzig 1941, 102./Cf. J.A. Cramer, *Catenae in Evangelia S. Matthaei et S. Marci ad fidem codd. Mss.*, Oxford 1840 (Reprint Hildesheim 1967), 80. Cf. A. Orbe, *Los primeros herejes ante la persecucion* (Analecta Gregoriana 83), Rome 1956, 49.

[25] John Chrysostom, *hom.* 34 in Mt. (PG 57 401-402)/J.A. Cramer, op.cit. (preceding note), 80f. Cf. A. Orbe, *Los primeros herejes ante la persecucion* (Analecta Gregoriana 83), Rome 1956, 48.

[26] Cyril of Alexandria, *fr.* Mt. 10,32 (PG 72 397).

[27] Cyril of Alexandria, *Lc.* 12,8 (PG 72 728-9).

[28] Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 4,73,1 (ed. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu [GCS] 281,3-4). Cf. C. Scholten, op.cit. (see above note 15), 106 (note 42) who refers to Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 2,104,1; 4,15,3f; 4,43,4. Elsewhere, in *str.* 4,16,3 (Stählin-Früchtel-Treu [GCS] 256,5ff) Clement mentions anonymous heretics who a) denounce martyrdom as suicide

one important point: For Clement Herakleon' remarks about the vocal confession of the martyr are far too negative. Even if someone has failed to confess Christ in life and conduct, still, if he confesses Christ under torture even unto death, he demonstrates that he is a true believer. Clement writes:

> An inner attitude that is openly confessed and that is not changed even in the face of death cuts off with one stroke all passions which are generated through bodily desire. This is—so to say—a complete practical penance at the end of one's life and a true confession of Christ, testified with one's own voice.[29]

In the following Clement—referring to Mt 10,20—argues that those in whom the spirit of the Father confesses cannot be called 'hypocrites'. Clement makes a distinction: To confess one's faith is a moral obligation under all circumstances; to defend our faith, however, is not always within our power. Those who are able to defend their faith strengthen their fellow Christians through their witness and are likely to impress and even convert pagans.[30] Martyrdom is a glorious purification of the sins of the martyr.[31]

Why does Clement criticize Herakleon on this particular point?

Herakleon says that vocal confession before the authorities proves in and by itself nothing, because the hypocrites, too, can make that kind of confession. To modern readers this claim may sound astonishing. Surely, we would like to object with Clement, the very fact that someone confesses his faith and sticks to this confession in the face of torture and death, amply confirms his sincerity?

But if we raised this objection we would have missed Herakleon's point. Herakleon's concept of a true Christian is probably close to similar late antique ideas about the life of a true philosopher. Arrian's Epictetus devel-

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and b) argue that true martyrdom consists in the knowledge of the true God. Clement explicitly agrees with b) and rejects a) as the sophistry of cowards. He does not try to link Herakleon to these heretics. Moreover the Testimonium Veritatis, an encratitic writing from the Nag Hammadi Library, criticizes the vocal confession of foolish Christians who are delivering themselves "for the sake of the name" (IX,3,31-34/J.M. Robinson [ed.], The Nag Hammadi Library in English, 3rd edition, Leiden/New York etc 1988, 450-1). Cf. C. Scholten, op.cit. (see above note 15), 105-109.

[29] Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 4,73,3 (ed. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu [GCS] 281,10-12).

[30] Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 4,73,4-5 (ed. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu [GCS] 281,12-18).

[31] Clement of Alexandria, *str.* 4,74,3 (ed. Stählin-Früchtel-Treu [GCS] 281,25-26).

ops them in a chapter headed: 'To those who hastily assume the guise of the philosophers'.[32] There he voices his concern about those who don the garb of a philosopher but fail to live a philosophical life and thus bring the whole profession into disrepute. It is simply not enough, Epictetus argues, to wear a rough cloak and to let your hair and your beard grow in order to become a philosopher. You have to reason and to live like a philosopher. It is better not to announce prematurely one's calling as a philosopher and prepare oneself in privacy for a philosophical life than to be mistaken for an accomplished philosopher and thus to endanger the noble cause of philosophy. Epictetus says:

> For that reason those who were ignorant of my purpose wondered how it was that, although I was familiar with all the philosophers and lived with them, I was myself not acting in the rôle of a philosopher.[33]

He offers this piece of advice:

> Practise first not to let men know who you are; keep your philosophy to yourself a little while.[34]

And then he challenges his sceptical audience:

> See how I eat, how drink, how sleep, how endure, how refrain, how help, how employ desire and how aversion, how I observe my relationships, whether they be natural or acquired, without confusion and without hindrance; judge me on the basis of all this if you know how.[35]

Perhaps Herakleon's views can be even more firmly located within a philosophical context. For Herakleon it is important that the confession with the 'διάθεσις' has to take place before the confession with the voice. 'διάθεσις' is a technical term of Stoic moral psychology. For the Stoics, virtue "is rational consistency, a character of the soul's commanding faculty."[36] Hence the Stoics—unlike Plato and his disciples—do not distinguish between rational and irrational faculties of the soul. The 'ἡγεμονικόν' is completely rational unless it is in a defective state of irrationality. This state of irrationality is the opposite of virtue, vice. Thus the Stoics do not admit degrees

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[32] Epictetus, 4,8 (Translation Oldfather [LCL 218] 375).

[33] Epictetus, 4,8,19 (transl. Oldfather [LCL 218] 383).

[34] Epictetus, 4,8,35-6 (transl. Oldfather [LCL 218] 389).

[35] Epictetus, 4,8,20 (transl. Oldfather [LCL 218] 383).

[36] A.A. Long/D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers. Vol. 1: Translations of the principal sources with philosophical commentary*, Cambridge 1987, 383.

of virtue or vice: The soul is either wholly rational or wholly irrational.[37] Long-Sedley explain:

> A person's reasoning faculty is conceived as being either consistent or inconsistent; this consistency, or the virtue it promotes, is analogous to the straightness of a perfectly straight line. It is their inability to admit degrees that earns virtues the technical designation of 'character'.[38]

It is quite possible that Herakleon's concept of διάθεσις is close to Stoic διάθεσις; in both cases the stress is on the consistency of an inner disposition.[39] The Stoics believe that almost no one was actually able to become a sage and reach the summit of virtue, that is "the natural perfection of a rational being as a rational being." But if someone reached this pinnacle, he would be in a secure and perfect state of rationality.

Again the parallel with Herakleon's fragment is striking. The Christian peremptorily rejects the possibility that one of those who are saved (σῳζόμενος) may ever be in danger of renouncing his faith. For Herakleon it is clear: Those who are in Christ are secure in this state, apostasy is inconceivable.

There is no indication that Herakleon takes on board the whole apparatus of Stoic moral psychology. The Valentinian teacher does not prize the consistently rational life of Stoic doctrine, but rather a life that is in accordance with the Christian faith. However, by borrowing a key term (διάθεσις) of Stoic moral psychology, he makes it clear that the Christian philosopher is no theatrical fool who rushes to his certain death with undue ostentation, but rather a marble character and wise man whose impressive consistency in life and conduct is not outdone by that paragon of virtue, the stoic sage. Moreover, whereas the Stoics have to concede that despite their best efforts hardly any member of their school qualified for the title of a 'sage', Herakleon, the disciple of Valentinus and master of Christian philosophy, seems to have no difficulties to speak of 'σωζόμενοι'.[40]

Clement of Alexandria takes his cue from Herakleon's remarks and puts them in proper philosophical perspective. When he speaks of that 'διάθεσις ὁμολογουμένη' that does not change even under torture unto death, the

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[37] Long/Sedley (see note 36), ibidem.

[38] Long/Sedley (see note 36), ibidem (internal references omitted).

[39] Cf. also Herakleon, *fr.* 27 (Völker 76,10).

[40] The Stoic parallel has also been pointed out by A. Orbe (see note 25), 257-261. I disagree, however, with Orbe on some points of detail.—In this fragment there is no talk of pneumatic, psychic of hylic natures.

pun is, surely, intended: 'διάθεσις ὁμολογουμένη' is both that 'consistent character' which according to traditional Stoic doctrine constitutes virtue, and the new Christian character that proves and, indeed, realizes itself by advertising and confessing itself in public. It is the confession of this character, Clement claims, which reestablishes the rationality of the soul by cutting off all unruly passion and making the Christian confessor and martyr realize the ideal of apatheia. Clement certainly agrees with Herakleon's emphasis on the inner consistency and continuity of a perfect life,[41] but he also allows for the possibility of a decisive change of heart at the end of one's life. It is Clement who is here testing to its limits the plausibility of Christian morality by rethinking it from the perspective of martyrdom.

Both Herakleon and Clement are trying to define the Christian martyr in a way that allows them to accommodate this new concept within the range of spiritual ideals on offer in the 2nd century. Herakleon sees the Christian martyr as not different from a traditional philosopher-martyr: His violent death is not the desired climax of his life, but rather something that all those who live according to their convictions may have to accept under certain circumstances. Clement, by contrast, is bolder, but to the same degree probably also less plausible in the eyes of a sceptical pagan.

III

We have already quoted from Tertullian's *Scorpiace*; it was written in the heyday of a local persecution, probably around 212 A.D. With this treatise Tertullian argues against disciples of Valentinus who—he alleges—tried to persuade their fellow Christians that God does not require them to suffer martyrdom. Tertullian quotes, paraphrases or fakes their arguments in the following way:

> These people die for no purpose. (. . .) These simple souls do not know what is written and how it is written; nor do they know where, when and in front of whom one must confess—except that it is not simplicity, but rather vanity, or, indeed, sheer madness to die for God in order that he shall save me. Thus he who shall save me will kill me? Christ died for us once, he was slaughtered once so that we should not be killed. If he asks the same in return, does it mean that he expects salvation from my death? Does God really demand the blood of human beings, even if he rejects the blood of the goats and bulls? He certainly prefers the penitence of a sinner to his death.[42]

[41] Cf. *str.* 4,14-15; 4,85,3.

[42] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 1,7-8 (ed. Reifferscheid/Wissowa [CChr.SL II] 1070).

It is difficult to determine whether this passage relates arguments that have actually been advanced by disciples of Valentinus. The mockery of the simple-minded ignorance concerning the right kind of confession already introduces the erroneous exegesis of Mt 10,32 which Tertullian ascribes to the Valentinians.[43] He writes:

> Of course, only when the souls have left the body and have begun to be examined on the different storeys of the heavens about that which they have received[44] and to be asked about those secret sacraments of the heretics, only then must one confess before the true powers and the true men, those *teleti*, *akineti* and *abaskanti* of Valentinus. But, they say, even the demiurge himself has not acknowledged men from our world (*nostrates*) unfailingly as human beings, for he has reckoned them as waterdrops in a bucket and chaff on the threshing-floor and spittle and locusts and has also likened them to irrational beasts.[45]

If we believe Tertullian, the Valentinians taught that Mt 10,32 does not talk about a confession that has to take place here on earth, but rather about a confession that will take place after the soul of the believer has left the body and ascends through the different levels of the heavens.[46] The 'men' mentioned in Mt 10,32 are not human beings here on earth, but powers in heaven; Is 40,15-16, Os. 13,3 and Ps 48,13.21 (LXX) prove that even the god of this world, the demiurge (much less the highest God!) does not acknowledge the men of this world as human beings.

Tertullian had mentioned the Valentinian dismissal of martyrdom already in ch. 30 of his treatise *Adversus Valentinianos*. The context is a polemical portrait of the two kinds of ethics which the Valentinians prescribe for the 'psychics' and the 'pneumatics' respectively:

> Hence they [i.e. the pneumatics] believe that there are no actions that are obligatory for them and they do not observe any religious duties. They even eschew the obligation of martyrdom by some arbitrary interpretation.[47]

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[43] Cf. also Tertullian, *Val.* 30,2 (ed. Kroymann [CChr.SL II] 774) with the commentary of J.-C. Frédouille, *Contre les Valentiniens* T.II (SC 281), Paris 1981, 337.

[44] See G. Azzali Bernardelli (ed.), *Tertulliano. Scorpiace* (Biblioteca Patristica), Firenze 1990, 272.

[45] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 10,1-2 (ed. Reifferscheid/Wissowa [CChr.SL II] 1087).

[46] This exegesis probably derived some justification from the observation that the second half of Mt 10,32 firmly locates the confession of the Son beyond this world, in heaven.

[47] Tertullian, *Val.* 30,1 (ed. Kroymann [CChr.SL II] 774). See also the commentary ad locum by J.-C. Frédouille, *Contre les Valentiniens* T.II (SC 281), Paris 1981, 335f.

This passage is partly dependent on Irenaus of Lyon, *haer.* 1,6,2-3 where the libertine ethics of the Valentinian pneumatics are described. However, although Irenaeus claims that the pneumatics have no qualms about partaking of sacrifical meat and joining in pagan celebrations, he does neither explicitly mention their rejection of martyrdom nor allude to a Valentinian exegesis meant to justify this rejection.[48]

Tertullian continues in Val. 30,2 with an allusion to the Valentinian interpretation of Mt 10,32:

> And woe to us, if we eschew in any way the yoke of discipline, if we grow careless in the works of sanctity and justice, if we prefer to confess our faith somewhere else and not before the powers of this age, in front of the tribunals of the governors.[49]

To return to the passage from the Scorpiace: I suspect that this is not a close paraphrase of a Valentinian source, but that it is Tertullian who is here construing an heretical doctrine. Tertullian mentions the different storeys also in *Val.* 7,1-3, in the context of a highly satirical portrait of the Valentinian heavens.[50] The interrogation about the secret sacraments of the heretics is somewhat clarified by *An.* 18,4 where he talks about the *haereticarum idearum sacramenta* and explains them forthwith: *hoc enim sunt et aeones et genealogiae illorum*.[51] The plural of *teleti, akineti et abaskanti* is meant to be disparaging—*Akinetos* and *Teletos* are Valentinian eons and mentioned as such in various passages of Val., *Abaskantos* cannot claim as much and is probably added by Tertullian just for fun.[52] Moreover the quotations of Is 40,15-16 and Os. 13,3 can be found elsewhere in Tertullian's writings;[53] *pulvis areae* is—compared with LXX and the Hebrew text—a varia lectio.[54]

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[48] Cf. A. Orbe, op.cit. (see note 25), 88-89.

[49] Tertullian, *Val.* 30,2 (ed. Waszink [CChr.SL II] 774).

[50] G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. (see note 44), 271.

[51] Tertullian, *De anima* 18,4 (ed. Waszink [CChr.SL II] 807). I owe the reference to G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. (see note 44), 272.

[52] G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. (see note 44), 273.—Following a suggestion of C. Scholten I consider it also possible that *teletos, akinetos* and *abaskantos* (LSJ, s.v.: 'secure against enchantments, free from harm') may describe various states of perfection on various levels.

[53] *Iud.* 1,3; *Praescr.* 8,9; *Paen.* 4,3; *Marc.* 4,25,1 (see G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. [see note 44], 274-5).

[54] G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. (see note 44), 275. Cf. A. Orbe, op.cit. (see note 25) 99f who refers to *res.* 59, a passage in which Is 40,15 is alluded to in the context of a rejection of the Valentinian doctrine of different natures of human beings.

However, even if we assume that Tertullian's gloss is not faithfully transcribing a Valentinian source, the above quotation from *adv Val* (which is earlier) suggests that there must have been a Valentinian exegesis of Mt 10,32 defending some kind of esotericism. The Valentinian reading of Mt 10,32 does not so much reject martyrdom as rather caution against sharing some esoteric teaching with all and sundry. The *nostrates* (Scorpiace 10,2) designate mankind in general. It is Tertullian who interprets this as a rejection of martyrdom.

A similar kind of antignostic polemic can be found in the section 24 of Epiphanius' hereseological encyclopedia, the *Panarion*. Here Epiphanius deals with Basilides and his disciples. His hereseological portrait of the Alexandrian teacher is heavily indebted to Irenaeus of Lyon, *haer.* I,24,2-4. Already Irenaeus had claimed that the Basilideans reject martyrdom. Epiphanius writes:

> Again, he gives the permissive teaching that martyrdom is not necessary. There will be no reward for a martyr, since he does not bear witness to the creator of a man; he is testifying for the crucified, Simon. (. . .) But Basilides plainly leads a host of devils against souls by teaching them the denial of God, for the Lord himself says, "Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." But the scum says, "We are the 'men'. The others are all swine and dogs. And this is why he said: 'Cast not thy pearls before swine, neither give that which is holy unto dogs'."[55]

In the first part of this quotation Epiphanius establishes a connection between the docetic Christology of (Ps.)-Basilides and his rejection of martyrdom. Although both pieces of information are derived from Irenaeus' account of Basilides, Irenaeus fails to make the connection. The second part of this quotation is Epiphanius' addition and its authenticity is very doubtful. Again the heretical exegesis of Mt 10,32 turns on a polemical re-definition of the 'men' mentioned in the biblical quote. And again the heretical interpretation can be read as a defense of esoteric teaching rather than as a rejection of martyrdom.

[55] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 24,4,1.5,1-2. Translation: F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Book I* (Sects 1-46), Leiden 1987, 73.

IV

We have looked at two Valentinian interpretations of Mt 10,32/Lk 12,8—Herakleon's exegesis and the exegesis of some anonymous disciples of Valentinus in Carthage. Herakleon's exegesis has no obvious 'gnostic' characteristics—it agrees with 'Catholic' exegesis and its main point is in tune with philosophical ethics. The exegesis reported by Tertullian, on the other hand, seems to be typically and authentically gnostic: It favours the avoidance of martyrdom and refers to the mysteries of the soul's ascent. Modern scholarship has wondered how it is possible that both these interpretations are found within one theological school, the Valentinians.

According to A. Orbe, it should come as no surprise that the school of Valentinus offers two different interpretations for Mt 10,32. Herakleon's explanation, Orbe avers, is a piece of exoteric exegesis whereas Tertullian reports a piece of esoteric Valentinian teaching.[56] This explanation has found favour with some scholars.[57] Its validity, however, is rather doubtful: There are no indications in either Herakleon's fragment or in Clement's comments on this fragment that would warrant the conclusion that we deal here with an exoteric as opposed to an esoteric piece of exegesis. And Tertullian does not present his Valentinian exegesis as a piece of esoteric teaching either; rather, he seems to deal with latter day Valentinians who aggressively publish their views in order to win support for their group. Finally, at the close of Herakleon's fragment it is expressly said that Valentinian Christians should confess their faith both before those that are saved (σῳζόμενοι) and the pagans. This remark clearly rejects any esoteric avoidance of public confession.

But A. Orbe offers a second, more attractive explanation:[58] According to it, these two different interpretations of Mt 10,32 indicate two different types of Valentinianism: Herakleon represents an intellectual type of Valentinianism which espouses a rigoristic morality stressing the need to lead a pure and blameless life. On the other hand, Tertullian's Valentinians were followers of Mark the Magician. They rather endorsed a libertine

[56] A. Orbe, op.cit. (see note 25), 92

[57] J.-C. Frédouille, op.cit. (see note 47), 336; G. Azzali Bernardelli, op.cit. (see note 44) 270.

[58] It is only fair to point out that Orbe does not seem to consider these two explanations as alternatives.

morality, advocating a dissolute life without moral boundaries; their type of Valentinianism can be characterized as 'theurgic and ritualistic'.

Orbe's second explanation has much to commend itself. Although I would hesitate to agree with every detail of it (e.g. I am not sure whether the Valentinians in Carthage really subscribed to a wholly libertinist morality). I find it eminently plausible to assume some variety within Valentinianism. Moreover, our two pieces of gospel exegesis may point to a certain development within Valentinianism itself. At the beginning it had been a school consisting of personalities like Valentin himself, Ptolemy and Herakleon—i.e. highly gifted intellectuals advancing their subtle and complex interpretation of the Christian message in hymns, biblical commentaries and other writings. Since at their time catholic orthodoxy was still largely undefined, their positions were not systematically at variance with it. Indeed, someone like Clement of Alexandria could discover some common ground between their brand of intellectual Christianity and his. However, by Tertullian's time the Valentinian school had in some places deteriorated into a marginalized sect that followed a strategy of aggressive provocation of, and dissent from, the majority church. Its intellectual richness was largely a thing of the past, but some distant memories of past discourses and past debates still lingered on.

Herakleon's exegesis of Lk 12,8ff par also suggests some interesting conclusions with regard to the early history of New Testament exegesis in the 2nd century. So called 'Gnostics' like Basilides and Herakleon were among those who inaugurated the exegesis of the Gospels and (perhaps) the letters of Paul.[59] Whereas Basilides' *Exegetica* (two fragments have survived) probably were a commentary which used the gospel text in order to discuss philosophical problems, Herakleon's exegesis payed more attention to philological detail and proceeded verse by verse. Perhaps Herakleon wrote commentaries (or: *hypomnemata*) both on (selected passages/sayings from) the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John. Moreover, if our assumption is correct that the 'cento' preceding the fragment is also derived from Herakleon's commentary, it is clear that for Herakleon the Gospel of Luke was the most important synoptic gospel, Matthew and Mark only supply-

[59] If—as T. Zahn, op.cit. (see note 13), 728 (note 3) suggests—Alexander, the vetus haereticus, whom Jerome lists in the prologue to his commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians among his exegetical predecessors (PL 26,309) is identical with the Valentinian teacher mentioned by Tertullian, *De carne Christi* 16f (ed. Mahé [SC 216] 276ff).

ing the parallels. In this respect, then, Herakleon would be in conspicuous agreement with perhaps Basilides and surely Marcion. As an exegete of the gospels Herakleon is among the forerunners of Origen. His prominent place in the history of New Testament exegesis is beyond doubt.

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